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HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS, INCLUDING ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVE ENJOYMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.20/Rev.1

Thirteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement (A/C.5/47/55), submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.20/Rev.1, relating to human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms. During its consideration of the statement, the Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information.

2. Should the General Assembly adopt draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.20/Rev.1, the Secretary-General would establish the United Nations Observer Mission to Verify the Referendum in Eritrea (UNOVER) under the terms of reference outlined in paragraph 4 of his statement of programme budget implications.

3. On the basis of the assumptions outlined in paragraphs 4 to 19 of the statement, the Secretary-General estimates that an additional appropriation of $2,577,000 would be required under section 2 of the programme budget for 1992-1993. An amount of $184,000 would also be required under section 36, Staff assessment, offset by the same amount under income section 1, Income from staff assessment. Also, according to the Secretary-General, the General Assembly would need to authorize him to enter into commitments of up to

$103,000 for that portion of the additional requirements which would arise in 1992, pending the General Assembly's approval of revised appropriations for 1992-1993.

4. As reflected in paragraph 15 of the Secretary-General's statement, $1,672,000 relates to personnel costs such as salaries, fees, travel and related allowances, including a contingency provision for death and disability claims for any international observers not covered by the relevant United Nations Staff Rules. The balance, $905,000, would provide for operational costs such as rental of premises, rental and acquisition of vehicles, and communications equipment and rental of aircraft. The Advisory Committee notes from the tabular summary in paragraph 15 that, of the total requirements of $2,577,000, an amount of $103,000 has been reflected against 1992 while an amount of $2,474,000 has been shown for 1993.

5. As outlined in annex I to the statement, the requirements for personnel include, for periods ranging from approximately 2 to 22 weeks, the provision of 22 core posts (1 ASG, 2 P-5, 2 P-4, 3 P-3/4, 1 P-3, 10 P-2/3, 2 Field Service and 1 General Service) in addition to 123 staff under general temporary assistance and 100 election monitors.

6. In respect of other requirements listed in annex II to the statement, provision has been made for items such as rental of premises to accommodate UNOVER headquarters and three regional offices; the acquisition of nine vehicles for the duration of the operation and rental of additional vehicles for varying lengths of time; rental of aircraft for observer teams and medical evacuations if required; the acquisition of communications and various other equipment and supplies, and freight and cartage. As described in paragraph 13 of the statement and item 8 of annex II, public information activities are estimated at $42,000.

7. Notwithstanding the reasons given in the statement of programme budget implications, including the indication that efforts will be made to fill the 10 P-2/3 posts by United Nations Volunteers (para.8), the Advisory Committee believes that the number and level of core staff should be reduced and some of the functions of these staff be combined. Furthermore, estimates for personnel costs have been calculated at full cost and the Committee believes that there is a possibility for savings to be realized under such items as travel, common staff costs and compensation for death and disability.

8. The Advisory Committee observes that "no commitment has been made by the provisional government to provide office accommodation" (para. 11). The Committee believes that, pursuant to the Secretary-General's further negotiations with the provisional government, support should be obtained to the extent possible, in the form of office accommodation, local staff, including drivers and interpreters, vehicles and even the possibility for provision of aircraft. Considerable savings could thus be realized against those items of expenditure.

9. The Advisory Committee notes that assistance and input from specialized agencies and other United Nations bodies has not been mentioned in the statement. The possibility of this should be vigorously pursued. In addition, the Committee believes that there is room for absorption of the requirements for public information activities within the Department of Public Information.

10. On the basis of the considerations mentioned above and bearing in mind that the mission might not start on the proposed date, the Advisory Committee believes that a reduction in the Secretary-General's estimate from $2,577,000 to $2,000,000 should be made. Furthermore, with regard to the mode of financing of UNOVER, the Committee notes from paragraph 18 of the document that the Secretary-General has made an appeal to Member States for voluntary contributions to fund UNOVER through the United Nations Trust Fund for Electoral Observation, established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 46/137 of 17 December 1991. The Committee was informed that the appeal was launched only on 2 November 1992; thus it is still too early to determine the success of this effort.

11. The Advisory Committee, therefore, does not agree with the Secretary-General's proposal that the requirements for UNOVER should be dealt with in the manner proposed in paragraphs 20 and 21 of his statement. However, under the terms of draft resolution A/C.3/47/L.20/Rev.1, the Secretary-General would be authorized to establish UNOVER and requested to arrange for the deployment of the mission as soon as possible. In view of this fact and taking into account paragraph 10 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that, if the Secretary-General is authorized by the General Assembly to commence operations, the related commitments be treated as an advance from the Working Capital Fund, with the understanding that the commitments would be a first charge against contributions received pursuant to resolution 46/137 and the Secretary-General's appeal dated 2 November 1992. On this basis, the Advisory Committee recommends that the Secretary-General be authorized to enter into commitments not exceeding $2 million pending receipt of voluntary contributions for this operation.